

the birds sound desperate too

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by [teeth_eater](#)

Summary

He walks until he can't smell smoke anymore, and there is still no town. Tommy is not stupid, he knows that his fingers are numb and his head is spinning. He knows that if he sits down he probably won't have the strength to get up. He wants to keep moving, he doesn't want to die, not after everything. He wants to survive. He...

His knees give out and he slides against a tree until he's sitting on the ground, gasping thinly and pressing both hands against his stomach, trying to keep his insides where they're supposed to be.

Tommy Innit has finally escaped the ship that's held him captive all these months. In doing so he seals his own fate.

//NONCANON for the Human Error Universe

Notes

dont read this if you are sensitive to death
just needed a break from working on SHA, and i don't usually get to stretch my angst muscles
(in a way that wont be resolved)

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Everything hurts.

Tommy is not religious, though he's had to attend some services with certain families he's stayed with, and he remembers how Hell was described. Hot, people screaming, endless torture and suffering. Tommy has everything but the people screaming.

There are no people anymore. No one here to scream but him, and his throat is too dry to do much more than sob silently. He can hear flames crackling, not in the cockpit with him but close. Way too close. Tommy breathes in through his mouth and smoke burns in the back of his throat and then in his lungs. He remembers seeing a model of the lungs of someone with smoke damage in health class and hopes he doesn't get sick from it. He hopes he lives long enough for it to matter.

The door is hot when he touches it, so he knows there is fire behind it. Dream is not screaming anymore. No one is. Tommy stares at the window. There is a long crack spiderwebbing through it. How it didn't shatter upon impact with the ground Tommy doesn't know, it must be some sort of special space glass. He hopes it isn't too strong. Strong enough to keep him locked in here with the smoke and fire and everything else that makes up Hell. Tommy hauls himself up onto the dashboard and rams his shoulder into the glass. The spiderweb crack lengthens, and his shoulder throbs with pain. He does it again. This is worse than Hell. There are no people anywhere. Maybe this used to be Hell, other people suffering beside him, burning in their own pits of fire, but now? This must be something worse.

The window breaks and Tommy falls out of the ship and onto a pile of turned soil and broken glass. He feels the sting of fresh cuts on his arms and legs, but that pales in comparison to the fresh air he's breathing. The fact that there's oxygen this far out in space is its own sort of luck, and even if the air feels slightly different than he's used to. Even if... God, who is he kidding? This is not luck.

He gets to his feet, bracing himself against a nearby tree before trying to stumble forward. Maybe he can find...a town or something. Anyone that can help him. There must be good aliens out there, maybe they'll help him get home.

Tommy takes a step forward, and his middle gives a pang. Tommy hisses in through his teeth and reaches for the offending area. His hand comes away bright red. Tommy stares at it for a moment, not quite sure what he's looking at. He's bled a lot during his time on Dream's ship. More than most of the others. He's bleeding again now, though he doesn't know how. A wound from a scrap piece of metal during the crash or an injury obtained during his mad dash to freedom he has no idea. Either way, his hand is red and his blood is dripping onto the dirt, making black dots. Tommy presses a hand to his wounds like that will help at all and begins his walk to what he hopes is a town.

He walks until he can't smell smoke anymore, and there is still no town. Tommy is not stupid, he knows that his fingers are numb and his head is spinning. He knows that if he sits down he probably won't have the strength to get up. He wants to keep moving, he doesn't want to die, not after everything. He wants to survive. He...

His knees give out and he slides against a tree until he's sitting on the ground, gasping thinly and pressing both hands against his stomach, trying to keep his insides where they're supposed to be.

"No, no..." He breathes, voice reedy. He doesn't shut his eyes, keeping them open and staring at the milky sky above.

He doesn't realize he's closed his eyes until they open again at the sound of birdsong. For a moment, he is comforted. He is not alone, not really, not if the birds are here. He shuts his eyes again. There is not much he can do now, and if he just listens to the birds he can almost pretend he's on Earth again.

He is drifting off, forgetting where he is. He is startled out of his floating by another bird. A distinctly alien-sounding bird. A reminder of where he is, of what Tommy's fate is going to be.

He sobs through gritted teeth. He thinks about Earth. He's been up in space for... what? A couple of months now? Everyone he's ever known back home probably thinks he's dead. Or a runaway. Tommy hopes they think he's dead. He hopes they held a funeral for him. He hopes... that if he ever goes back he'll be embraced. That people will cry over him. He hopes they had a funeral with good food and black clothes and an empty casket.

He knows they didn't.

The birds aren't his. Nothing is anymore, he has nothing. Even the clothes on his back are cut in places where he fought too hard and they just decided to tear through his clothes to take their macabre samples.

He shifts a little, and the jolt of pain draws another high whine out of his throat.

In school, their class had been made to read *Of Mice and Men*. Tommy had skimmed it, but there was one scene that made him cry, not that he'd ever admit to it. He remembers George telling Lennie to think about the farm they'd have together. Some beautiful, distant dream. Tommy wants no farm. He wants nothing but to go home, to sit in the city garden and go home and get scolded for staying out too late. He wants dirt on his knees and grass in his hair.

He wants... some nights. When it is quiet, and the experiments are done. Tommy imagines what his life would have been like if he'd been adopted by Sam. He imagines his face, smile lines creasing up around his eyes, green and sparkling, a broad smile on his face as he greets him for, in Tommy's own mind, the first time.

Sam would drive him home, to a big house with a big yard and a dog. There would be no neighbors to judge him for being too loud, only deep woods that are as dark as they are safe. They'd have dinner, pizza, or something equally unhealthy, and Sam would tell him that they won't be eating like this all the time, this is just a celebration. Tommy would groan and complain, but he wouldn't be able to hide his smile.

Then Sam would make hot chocolate, and there would be a lump of whipped cream on top that would be so thick it would be impossible to drink without a straw. Sam would get whipped cream on his face and Tommy would laugh at him. Sam would make him go to bed

early so he could get some rest after the long car ride, and the next day they'd go out to buy clothes. Tommy would buy clothes that were soft and new, and a bedspread in his favorite colors and patterns. He'd have more pillows than he knew what to do with, and Sam wouldn't make fun of him when he asked to buy a stuffed animal.

They'd go home and Sam would promise that Tommy would stay here for as long as he wanted, and they'd watch a movie together. Sam would let Tommy pick, but Tommy would be too safe and happy to stay awake, and would fall asleep bundled up in blankets with the heavy weight of a dog on top of him. Sam would wake him up for dinner-

The birds caw again, startling Tommy out of his dream. He scowls at the sky. Why the universe couldn't even let him die in peace he'll never know.

He can't feel his hands. He feels kind of sick and shaky, but that's to be expected. He leans his head back, letting it list to the side. He doesn't have the energy to hold it up anymore. He slides down the tree until he's lying on his back, hands still pressed over his stomach, but with no pressure now, too weak to even try to keep himself together.

He wishes Sam was here. He imagines him walking into the clearing, startled at Tommy's condition, but strong and sure of what to do. He would carry Tommy back to the alien village and find them a doctor. Not like the people on the ship, real doctors who just wanted to help. They'd patch him up, and sure, he'd be out of it for a while, probably sleeping on some alien's couch, but Sam would be there to nurse him back to health with tea and good food and whatever else people get when they're sick.

But that's not going to happen.

Sam is dead, and Tommy is alone.

It suddenly hits him that he's dying, and sure he'd known he wasn't going to be getting back up, but for it to really hit him that he wouldn't be making it out of here is something else. He is going to die on the soil of some alien planet. He shuts his eyes. They'd have pasta for dinner, and maybe ice cream for dessert. Sam would smile and Tommy would dry the dishes while Sam washed them. He'd tell stories like he did on the ship, ones about his job and his family. Now, though, it wouldn't be tinged with grief. Tommy would tell stories too, about his friends and the time he got caught stealing from a gas station. Then Sam would gasp and look far too offended at Tommy's criminal activities, and Tommy would laugh.

They'd bake something together, the sun warm through the windows. Something easy, that Tommy can actually pull off. Like cake. From a box, but Sam would show him a trick to make it taste like a fancy bakery cake. Tommy will pretend he's not listening, but he knows that every time he makes a box cake after that he'll be doing it the way Sam taught him. He hasn't had anything sweet since-

No, Tommy wants to think about the house and the big yard. In his head, he calls the dog Fran and pets her when he's nervous or sad. The birds are louder now, like they're afraid. Fran sits under the table at dinner and whines for table scraps. Sam bitches when he feeds her from his plate, but he does the same when he thinks Tommy's not looking. Are they afraid of him? Sometimes the bad aliens would flinch when he showed his teeth or yelled. Tommy would

start actually trying to get good grades because Sam hangs his good assignments on the fridge and starts bragging about him whenever people come over. Tommy whines and says it's for babies, but Sam knows he's bluffing, and he never tries to take it down. Sam's friends are nice, and if any of them say anything rude or mean he takes them to another room to talk to them and they never do it again.

The birds sound weird here. Not like the ones back home. Tommy reaches for a reason before it hits him. Right, Sam is American. It only makes sense that they'd have different birds in America.

The sun is warm on his face. Everything smells weird, but maybe that's just what America is like. Tommy lays in Sam's backyard and listens to his birds, waiting for Sam to call him inside before it gets dark. Even with the strange birds and the odd smells, Tommy likes it here, with Sam. He feels safe. The birds' shrieks grow quieter, like they're getting further and further away. Tommy hopes they come back soon. Birds leaving always means winter, and Tommy's hands are already cold.

Tommy thinks he hears Sam calling his name from the backdoor, so he rolls to his side and stands up. The birds are silent now, and he sees the big house and the long grass and the trees. Fran runs up next to him, tongue lolling and tail wagging. He smiles and rubs her back. Sam calls him again and Fran is darting off to the house. Tommy would run after her, but he's tired. He walks up to the porch where Sam is smiling at him. Tommy can smell something sweet. He smiles back. Sam walks into the house, gesturing for Tommy to follow. "Come on kiddo," He says, voice soft on the edges. "I made cake. Come help me frost it." "Too old to frost it yourself?" Tommy teases. Sam laughs, throwing his head back a little. "Come inside," He says. "You're gonna catch a cold."

Tommy follows Sam into the house.

End Notes

thanks for reading my friends.

if you liked this tell me what you think. Its not my usual style but it was fun (for me at least)

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